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Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 06898 041030Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 6898

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PDIP, KS, US
SUBJ: KIM DONG JO QUESTIONAIRE PROCEDURES

REF: A. STATE 196826, B. SEOUL 6839, C. SEOUL 6744

1. I CALLED ACTING FONMIN RHIE MOON YONG THIS AFTERNOON TO PRESS HIM TOWARD FINAL AGREEMENT ON PROCEDURES FOR QUESTIONING KIM DONG JO. AFTER MORE OR LESS APOLOGIZING ALONG LINES SUGGESTED PARA 5 REFTEL A, I URGED THAT THE ROKG CONSIDER MY PROPOSAL OF YESTERDAY (REFTEL B) SIMPLY AS ONE WAY TO BRIDGE THE COMMITTEES' DESIRE TO BE ABLE TO CLARIFY THE QUESTIONARE AND THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT'S INSISTENCE ON A ONE SHOT EXCHANGE. I EMPHASIZED THE LONG WAY WE HAVE COME, THE SMALL DISTANCE BETWEEN US OVER A BASICALLY SMALL MATTER, AND MY CONCERN ABOUT THE POTENTIALLY GREAT DAMAGE OF A FUTURE MISUNDERSTANDING IF WE COULD NOT AGREE ON PROCEDURES FOR CLARIFICATION. MAKING CLEAR THAT I WAS STILL SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, I THEN REVIEWED THE SUGGESTION FOR AN INFORMAL (AND CONFIDENTIAL) PROCESS OF CLARIFICATION SANDWICHED INTO THE FORMAL SUBMISSION AND RETURN OF THE QUESTIONAIRE.

2. UNLIKE YESTERDAY, RHIE ADOPTED A NEUTRAL STAND. HE SAID HIS GOVERNMENT NEEDED SOME TIME TO STUDY THE PROBLEM
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AT HIGH LEVELS AND ALSO WISHED TO CONTACT THE FONMIN WHO IS IN PARIS. HE AGREED EMPHATICALLY ABOUT THE DESIRABILITY OF AGREEING IN ADVANCE ON DETAILED PROCEDURES AND PROMISED TO BE BACK IN TOUCH WITH ME NEXT WEEK.

3. I ALSO COMPLAINED TO RHIE ABOUT MOFA'S BACKGROUND STATE-MENTS HERE IN SEOUL WHICH HAVE TAKEN ISSUE WITH THE HOUSE

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AND SENATE STATEMENTS OF AUGUST 3. I ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CONGRESSIONAL STATEMENTS WERE NOT AN ENTIRELY ACCURATE REFLECTION OF WHAT THE ROKG HAS UNDERTAKEN TO DO BUT I POINTED OUT THAT THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT WAS COMMITTED TO NOTHING MORE THAN WHAT THE FONMIN HAD SAID TO ME ON AUGUST 1 (REFTEL C). TAKING ISSUE WITH THE CONGRESS WAS FOOLISH AND I HOPED THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD FIND IT IN THEIR SELF-INTEREST TO ADOPT A POSITIVE TONE.

4. COMMENT: I AM MILDLY ENCOURAGED BY RHIE'S PROGRESSION FROM HIS NEGATIVE VIEWS YESTERDAY TO HIS NEUTRAL STAND TODAY. DOWN THE LINE IN MOFA AND THROUGH KCIA CHANNELS WE ARE BEING ASKED SENSIBLE, PRACTICAL QUESTIONS WHICH IS ALSO A GOOD SIGN. THUS I RECOMMEND THAT WE PROCEED AS FOLLOWS: A) URGE THE HOUSE AND SENATE ETHICS COMMITTEES STAFFS TO BEGIN TO DRAW UP THEIR QUESTIONAIRES FOR KIM DONG JO MAKING THEM AS THOROUGH AS POSSIBLE; MAXIMIZING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR YES/NO ANSWERS AND MINIMIZING THE NEED FOR SUBSEQUENT CLARIFICATION; B) THAT WE LET THINGS COOL WITH THE ROKG UNTIL NEXT WEEK; C) THAT WE URGE THE CONGRESS TO MINIMIZE PUBLIC REACTION TO ROK STATEMENTS; AND D) THAT THE DEPARTMENT CONFIRM THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THE INFORMAL CLARIFICATION PROCUEDURE I HAVE PUT TO THE KOREANS.

6. FOOTNOTE: AS AUTHORIZED, I SHIFTED THE BLAME FROM PARK KUN WOO TO BOB RICH FOR MY ACTIONS YESTERDAY. RHIE
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READILY ACCEPTED MY APOLOGIES AND SAID THE MATTER WAS CLOSED. TACTICALLY THIS ABJECT ACTION WAS PROBABLY IN OUR BEST INTERESTS, BUT IT HAS PERMITTED THE KOREANS TO QTE CORRECT UNQTE (DISTORT) THE RECORD.
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